

In August 2002, I completed a one-year MPhil degree at the University of Cambridge, supervised by Dr. Christine Carpenter. I have deferred my admission to the PhD program at Cambridge to October 2003. My dissertation, 'Kinship and Violence on the Anglo-Scottish Border, 1399-1455', which was joint winner of the prize for the best dissertation in the MPhil in Medieval History, was a preliminary study of the topic that I wish to develop further in my PhD. Dr. Carpenter, who has agreed to supervise my doctoral research, is an authority on local society in fifteenth-century England, and she has an interest in late medieval and early modern Scotland. The Cambridge PhD is entirely research-based; I am already fully trained in Latin, French, palaeography, and the writing and presentation of scholarly work.

I will address the question of whether the areas on either side of the Anglo-Scottish border constituted a frontier society, in which the borderlands of each kingdom were more like each other than like the rest of Scotland or England. Turner's frontier thesis has been adapted to the study of frontiers and 'frontier societies' in the middle ages (Turner, Lewis, Bartlett & MacKay). Tuck and Goodman have applied the frontier society model to the Anglo-Scottish border in the late fourteenth and fifteenth century, while others have argued that it is less applicable in this context (Tuck & Goodman, Goodman, Neville, Macdonald). The question of whether or not the borderlands comprised a frontier society is paramount to an understanding of the region. Such a question raises others, including the relative importance and uniqueness of legal, economic, religious, cultural and linguistic traditions that may or may not have stretched across the frontier, and the self-identity of the borderers themselves. Historians like Cardew, Goodman and Neville have already addressed some of these inter-related issues. My work will address the frontier society question by focusing on the development of a cross-border, kin-based raiding culture in the early fifteenth century.

It is well-established that parts of the Anglo-Scottish borderlands in the late fifteenth and sixteenth century were home to individuals who shunned national allegiance, rejected royal authority, organized into kin groups known as 'surnames', and participated in an illicit culture of cattle raids and feuds. Not only 'common' borderers but local landholders as well were involved in this locally driven, privately motivated, 'raiding culture' of the 'border reivers', which was a problem that was recognised and manipulated by the governments of both Scotland and England (Tough, Rae, Ellis, James, Watts, Meikle). Recently, Alastair Macdonald has challenged attempts to apply this model of the sixteenth century frontier back to the more source-poor late medieval period. He has pointed out the inadequacies of this approach, and demonstrated that in the later fourteenth century, the raiding activities of the borderers of both realms were driven not primarily by local, private motivations, but by the national, public motivations tied into the governmental military strategies of England and Scotland while at war.

I seek to address his objections by exploring what happened in the early fifteenth century, and when a kin-based raiding culture emerged. Two of the most salient, and interconnected, features of border raiding culture in the later period are the importance of kinship ties and the use of violence. The surname groups collected together a network of kin who frequently acted together in violent raiding across the border or in their own country. Cardew has explored the role of the surnames from 1455 to 1502, but little has

been said about them in the early fifteenth century. I seek to examine their organisation, leadership, and role in violence, as well as their relationship to the violence of landholding society. Landholder violence on the frontier, and the role of wider kin groups related to landholders is an important aspect of this analysis. An exploration of kinship and violence in this earlier period will reveal much about the development of a kin-based raiding culture and, more broadly, about whether or not the borderlands at this stage can be understood as a frontier society.

The preliminary conclusion that I drew in my MPhil dissertation was that a kin-based raiding culture might indeed have been emerging between 1399 and 1455. As the public violence of warfare became infrequent in the early fifteenth century, the private violence of locally driven raids and truce violations continued, and was beyond the public control of royal frontier administration, which itself may have contributed to the development of an illicit raiding culture. At the same time, evidence suggests that wider kin networks were used by border landholders to conduct violence and settle violent disputes. Aspects of the Scottish bloodfeud were incorporated in landholder disputes on both sides of the border, and a mixture of 'Scottish' and 'English' themes of violence and its settlement existed in some areas of the English borderlands. With regard to common violence, surname groups existed in the first half of the century, and it seems that Scottish surnames tended to look to a senior member, often a landholder, to provide leadership, while English surnames took direction from an unrelated knight or noble. Some surnames had members on both sides of the border, and they participated in English crime. Common members of these surnames, in contrast to landed members, certainly participated in cross-border crime, such as kidnapping, theft and receiving stolen goods.

These preliminary findings need to be challenged and developed. Moreover, bigger questions remain to be explored, like what drove the formation of surname groups in the English borderlands, whether 'English' themes of violence and dispute settlement are detectable in the Scottish borderlands, what was the nature of gentry conflict and violence in the English far north, and to what extent the Scottish earls of Douglas were able to control the violent behaviour of their frontier tenants. Using an extensive database, I plan to consult the complete gaol delivery records for my period from Cumberland, Westmorland and Northumberland, and to look at the records of the English court of the King's Bench. This particular aspect of my analysis will yield information on the degree to which surnames feuded with each other, the role of professional criminals on the frontier, and the nature and extent of gentry disputes. Scottish governmental sources are much less abundant, but the printed Exchequer Rolls and register of the Great Seal will be useful in addition to the many personal deeds held in the National Archives. Privately held records from both sides of the border, will be important sources for my inquiry.

My research will consider kinship and violence in the context of governmental administration, justice and law in both Scotland and England, and will lay the groundwork for a comparative inquiry into and reconsideration of the same issues in the later fifteenth and the early sixteenth century. The impact of the frontier on local society, and the manner in which landholders and common people in the borderlands conducted and organized themselves, are vital and unanswered questions about how the British realms developed politically and socially in a period when the horizons of Western Europe were beginning to expand dramatically.